

Original Research Article

Qualitative approach in evaluating service delivery in Namibia: The case of the decentralized Khomas Basic Education Directorate

Sitali. B. Lwendo^{1*}, Albert Isaacs¹

¹School of Education, University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia

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ABSTRACT

Decentralisation, in the Namibian public sector, was aimed at improving service delivery by regional and local authorities to the communities in Namibia. This research paper evaluates accountability of service delivery in the educational sector of the Directorate in Khomas Regional Council. This research paper used the qualitative approach and followed a triangulated method of data collection by using open and closed ended questions only. The findings of the research revealed that the understanding of the decentralisation policy and concepts are different among the participants. The paper recommends more sensitization, advocacy and training on the purpose and benefits of decentralisation

1. Introduction

As failure in implementing a public policy warrants a scientific study to explicitly determine the actual causes of the failure, this paper focuses on studying why the delegated education functions to the Khomas regional council, demonstrates poor service delivery and little accountability, while the expectation was to ensure that, the delegation of functions yield the intended policy objectives.

Before Namibia's independence, the country's education system was designed to reinforce apartheid rather than provide the necessary human resource base to promote equitable social and economic development. It was fragmented along racial and ethnic lines, with vast disparities in both the allocation of resources and the quality of education offered (MURD, 2011). There was a vast disparities between the education system designed for the black majority and that of the white minorities, in Namibia, in terms of both the allocation of resources and the quality of education offered. As such, this system had a great negative impact on the quality of education of the country.

The newly elected government in 1990 reaffirmed its commitment to decentralisation as promised in the SWAPO Party's 1989 Election Manifesto (SWAPO, 1989). Aiming at narrowing the gap between the black and white education systems in Namibia.

Government started developing the policy and legal framework upon which decentralisation would rest, such as; the Regional Councils Act, 1992, the Local Authorities Act, 1992 as well as the Decentralisation Policy, 1997. The government also set up institutional arrangements that would facilitate the implementation process. The decentralisation policy was adopted in 1997, and it has been one of the cornerstones of government since independence with the expressed purpose of bringing government closer to the people. In support of the decentralisation policy a Practical guide to the decentralization Enabling Act was introduced in the year 2008.

The aim of the decentralisation policy in Namibia is "to provide people at grass roots level with the opportunity to participate in decision making that affect their life and to extend democracy based on national ideas and values" (Decentralisation Policy, 1998). The implementation of

*Corresponding author: sblwendo@unam.na

decentralization Policy in Namibia aims to decentralize functions from line ministries to the Regional Councils and local authorities first by delegation and ultimately devolving the delegated functions, power, and authorities to local and regional governments. Thus, bringing government closer to the people.

Coupled to the above, the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) set about to create one unified structure for education administration, from the previous eleven fragmented, ethnically based departments. English replaced Afrikaans as the nation's official language. English was also chosen as the medium of instruction in schools and other educational institutions. A new, learner-centred curriculum for Grades 1 to 12 was developed and introduced, which was completed in 1998. It received recognition beyond Namibia's borders and included an adapted Cambridge IGCSE programme for senior secondary level.

It is against this background that the Government of Republic of Namibia has undertaken ongoing reform initiatives, with the view to further strengthen and transform the system of education in the country, while taking cognisance of the importance of decentralising its services to the regions.

In June 1998, the Cabinet Secretariat issued a circular about a cabinet memorandum to Permanent Secretaries (PSs) to start with the preparations for the implementation of the decentralisation policy as per the Cabinet Decision of March 1998 (MRLGHRD, 2007). This led to the organisational structures of regional councils to be expanded and fine-tuned to accommodate the new functions to be decentralised. The Directorate of Education was then established under the regional council structure as the first step towards decentralisation.

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) chose to delegate the functions of Primary and Secondary Education to regional councils with effect from the 01 April 2009 as per the Cabinet Decision No. 5th/17.03.09/004. The handover of these functions to the individual regional councils took place between 06 October 2009 to 24 November 2009 to explain and agree on how the functions and activities would be carried out (MRLGHRD, 2012). The Ministry of Education seconded all staff members attached to the above-mentioned functions to all the Regional Councils. The new Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) set about to create one unified, but decentralised structure for education administration. Currently, Namibia allocates more than 20% of its national budget to education. This represents six to seven percent of Namibia's total GDP and is one of the three countries with the highest percentage of GDP directed toward education in the world (MoE, 2011).

Decentralisation was supposed to improve, among others, the personnel and its services in regions,

However, this is far from being achieved. There are internal and external factors that affect effective delivery of education services. For example, regional jobs are not always done in time, which indicates that there is a problem with what the decentralised personnel who is supposed to carry out these duties. The paper is significant because it serves as a guiding tool to future research who would wish to conduct research on decentralisation and service delivery. It is expected to inform educators of the factors, benefits and challenges that affect decentralised education and exploring ways of addressing them to enhance efficiency in education service delivery. It also provided sound information to the policy makers and decision makers to come up with possible strategies to address these shortcomings and to come up with possible solutions before the implementation of the devolution phase. The paper also recommended improvement measures that will help other Education sector and the regional councils to improve their performance.

2. Methods

The research paper used a qualitative approach to evaluate service delivery in the basic education sector; hence open-ended questionnaires, observation and desk study approach were adopted. The researcher further studied relevant documents on decentralisation, i.e. Regional Council, Ministry of Educations Arts and Culture, Ministry of Urban and Rural Development reports, manuals guidelines, policies and Acts.

The researcher classified similar responses and put them into themes and categories. This helped the researcher to examine the interview transcript and documentary notes before identifying the pattern and organising the data into categories. A thematic analytical approach was adopted to analyse data for this paper. Data were presented through tables and charts and was interpreted in a narrative form. Face to face interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

3. Results

This research paper is organised according to major themes such as biographic data of respondents, general knowledge of decentralisation policy, coordination of delegated activities, human resources management under delegation phase, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation as well as readiness for devolution.

3.1 Gender of the respondents

The researcher wanted to establish whether Khomas Regional Council is gender conscious in terms of

staffing. The paper found that out of the 30 respondents, 18 are male and only 12 are female. From the 10 senior management respondents, only 2 are female and both females are from Ministry of Education Arts and Culture. Most senior and middle management respondents from Khomas Regional Council are male and most operational staff respondents are female. Despite the call for gender balance in management positions in government, it is clear that this is not adhered to since most senior management positions are still occupied by men. Women continue to occupy positions like secretaries, nurses, pre-primary and primary schools teaching since these positions were seen as being more suitable for women.

3. 2 Working years of experience of the respondents

The research paper further looked at the job experience of respondents to see various experiences of staff members. The paper revealed that the years of experiences of the research participants varied from two years to 35 years of working experience (Table 1). Those who spend two years in their positions are new recruits and those who have been recently promoted in the new positions. The table below presents the findings on working experiences of the thirty research participants.

Table 1: Working years of experience of the respondents

Research participants	Years of experiences
Regional Council staff members	2 – 22 years
Education Directorate staff members (Regional Council)	4 – 35 years
Constituency Councillors	3 – 10 years
Ministry of Education (Headquarters)	5 – 20 Years
Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD), Directorate of Decentralisation staff members	2 – 18 years

3.3 General knowledge on Decentralisation

The research paper findings reveal that respondents interviewed have different understanding and knowledge of decentralization as they were all giving different views on the definition of decentralisation. It is evident from the various responses that decentralisation means different things to different people.

Further analysis of the findings revealed that the understanding of the decentralisation policy by one respondent from Khomas Regional Council who indicated “that decentralization is the process of negotiation between the Line Ministries and the Regional Councils” was found to be in relation with the definition of decentralisation as defined by Regmi (2013).

A respondent from Ministry of Urban and Rural Development indicated that “it is a policy that advocates for inclusiveness and promote participatory democracy which anticipates the end results as accelerated service delivery down to the grassroots”. Several others responded that decentralisation was a process of bringing government services closer to the people, which is the slogan of decentralisation in Namibia, and it appears on almost all decentralisation material. Some responded that decentralisation is the transfer of powers from central to sub-national governments.

The research paper also found that the targeted community members were not really well informed about the concept of decentralisation as they both indicated that they did not know the meaning of decentralisation. Although many respondents tried to provide answers on their understanding of the decentralisation policy in their own way, it was evident that the decentralisation policy is not well known and not clear to many people. This is a clear indication that the ministry responsible for coordinating decentralisation in Namibia is not doing enough in terms of advocacy and sensitisation of the community members on the decentralisation policy.

The findings showed that the arguments point that the decentralisation policy is not well known, and not clear to all staff members was further supported by four operational members of staff from the Khomas Regional Council. The researcher also found that most staff members at the top and middle management levels who were interviewed understood decentralisation very well. The study found that the policy of decentralization is well understood at senior and middle management levels. Many respondents indicated that more sensitisation and advocacy on the policy of decentralisation were needed for the policy of decentralisation to be well understood by all. The researcher agrees with most respondents who pointed out that it was impossible to implement a policy that was not well understood or known by the majority of people.

Findings on the question whether it was a good idea to implement decentralisation policy in Namibia reveals that most respondents felt that it was, indeed, a good idea to implement the policy. Even the respondents who seem not to understand the policy so well-articulated the same sentiment. One respondent from MURD indicated that *“it was a good idea to implement the decentralisation policy because services should reach down to the people who are in need”*.

3.4 Coordination of delegated activities

This section presents and analyses the results on the perception of participants regarding the coordination of delegated activities between Khomas Regional Council and MEAC seconded staff in terms of planning and human resources management. The Directorate of Education is headed by a Director, and according to some respondents efforts are being made to ensure proper integration of education staff in the regional structures. See table 2 below.

Table 2. Inter-organisational collaboration and coordination

Institution	Position	Yes	No
Regional Council Staff members including Councilors	Senior management	0	1
	Middle management	1	2
	Operational staff	1	2
Seconded staff members	Senior management	0	1
	Middle management	1	2
	Operational staff	1	2
Ministry of Education, Arts and culture	Senior management	1	0
	Middle management	2	1
	Operational staff	2	1
Ministry of Urban and Rural Development	Senior management	1	1
	Middle management	2	3

The research paper found that there is a lack of inter-organizational collaboration and coordination with regard to the management of delegated education activities. Mostly operational and middle management respondents from the MEAC indicated that there is inter-organizational collaboration and coordination. However, a respondent from the RC middle management indicated that the planning of educational activities is done separately from that of the regional council.

Findings revealed different perceptions of respondents regarding the coordination of activities at regional level. A middle management respondent from Khomas Regional Council stressed that the education staff were reporting their Information Technology problems to their Director of Education, instead of to the responsible systems administrator in the Directorate of General Services in the regional council, and these caused delays in rectifying these problems. This perception was also confirmed by a senior manager from the RC who stated that *“the seconded staff members refused to follow the correct reporting lines and continued to do their activities like they used to before delegation phase”*.

The paper found that a Regional Development Coordinating Committee (RDCC) was established in Khomas region for the purpose of effective regional development planning and coordination. This

committee is composed of all regional heads of various sector ministries represented in the region and chaired by the Chief Regional Officer. Among other responsibilities, this committee looks at the overall developmental needs of the region, prioritises and makes recommendations to the regional council. Constituency Development Committees (CDCs) were established in all constituencies for the effective coordination of the planning and development of the region at the constituency level. The CDCs are chaired by the constituency councillors. Settlement Committees are also established in settlement areas for the purpose of effective coordination of the administration and development of the settlements. These committees identify, assess and evaluate community needs / problems to be considered for development proposals / plans by the Regional Council. The committees generally monitor the delivery of services within their area and report to the Regional Council (MURD, 2016).

A respondent from Khomas Regional Council Education Directorate was of the opinion that the role of planning was not well understood by most staff members in the planning directorate of the Khomas Regional Council and that the planning directorate was not aware of what was going on in education planning. Another respondent from Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture argued that the regional council was

considered to be crucial in the planning of education activities and as a result, the management of the regional council are always invited by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to be part of the education directorate planning sessions.

A senior management respondent from Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture revealed that a joint education planning workshop between Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the Regional Councils was held in 2014 and was co-facilitated by International Institute for Education Planning / UNESCO and NIPAM to address the issues of planning and coordination. Despite this, challenges of lack of coordination are still present.

Two Regional council respondents expressed the need to be involved in the budgeting and planning process of Education to ensure inclusiveness of regional needs and to ensure better understanding plans and implementation process.

The paper found that Education Planners are part of the Directorate of Planning and Coordination Services and that the Education Directorate personnel are

always part of the Regional Council’s planning processes and have been participating in the planning process. The research paper further found that there is joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Regional Capital Projects. However, the experience on the ground is different from what is written in various reports. Lack of office accommodation was said to hamper effective integration and customer service due to location of delegated staff.

3.5 Human Resources Management under Delegation Phase

Findings on the question whether the RC was involved in the recruitment of vacant positions of the delegated structures of education directorate revealed that all respondents from Khomas Regional Council and Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture answered in the affirmative. Only two respondents from Ministry of Urban and Rural Development said they were not sure. See table 3 below.

Table 3. Involvement in the recruitment process

Institution	Yes	No	Not sure
Regional Council Staff members Including Seconded staff	12	0	0
Councilors	1	0	1
Ministry of Education, Arts and culture	7	0	0
Ministry of Urban and Rural Development	4	1	2

All respondents answered yes to the question of whether the RC had an induction programme in place. However, most respondents were not sure as to whether this induction programme was really followed. One respondent from Khomas Regional Council senior management indicated that all seconded staff members were inducted, but he was not sure about other RC staff members.

All respondents were asked whether the RC has the capacity to manage delegated functions. Two respondents from Khomas Regional Council senior management indicated that the Regional Council was understaffed compared to the work carried out on a daily basis. The Human Resources Practitioners at the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture was said to be overloaded. The study further found that a lack of proper communication makes the Human Resources Division sometimes unaware and unable to be involved in some misconduct cases. One respondent indicated that although the RC has the capacity to manage delegated education functions, there was a degree of unwillingness from staff members. Another respondent from Ministry of Urban and Rural Development indicated that the ministry was

continuously capacitating the RC especially the development committees.

One respondent from the Regional Council operational staff indicated that she appreciated the good working relationship they had with delegated Line Ministries (specifically Education and Works Ministries). However, she said *“there were still few things where cooperation was needed from both parties such as coordinated recruitment between the Regional Council and Ministry of Education Arts and Culture needed to be strengthened”*. Furthermore, it was emphasized that delegated education offices are distant from the Regional Council Head Quarters, and this has been hampering the effective day to day coordination between the parties. Regional Council respondents indicated that there was a need to conduct annual meetings between the Regional Council and all delegated ministries for efficient and effective planning.

Other issues raised were cases of misconduct by the seconded staff that were reported to the Regional Council but where no action was taken against the offenders. A senior management respondent from RC revealed that a number of misconduct cases were pending and mostly lapse with time, especially getting

the preliminary report from principals / supervisors takes too long. One respondent recommended that all HR staff and principals need to be trained in misconduct proceedings to enable better handling of misconduct cases. A Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture respondent also highlighted the issue of delay on costing by the Department of Works which hampered the renovation of Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture infrastructures in the region.

The research paper found that there was a poor interpretation of relevant legislations such as Decentralization Enabling Act and Public Service Act by the Regional Council and the delegated Line Ministries in terms of human resources issues. The issue of overloaded Human Resources Practitioners at the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture was indicated as well as the unavailability of a Chief Human Resource Practitioner on the structure, which renders the Senior Human Resources Practitioner to perform extra duties. It was also highlighted that the Secondment Agreements for the seconded staff members expired already and there was a need for renewal of the same as a matter of urgency.

The files of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture seconded staff are kept at their respective offices. A RC respondent indicated that the Regional Council produce reports on updated personnel files on an annual basis.

3.6 Capacity Development under Delegation Phase

With regards to capacity development the paper found that the Regional Council has an Induction Programme in place for all staff members including delegated staff members. But for promotional posts, induction is mostly done informally by immediate supervisors while formal induction was conducted annually or every second year.

The research paper further revealed that there is a Training Committee in place comprising of Regional Council and delegated Line Ministries' representatives

and they meet on an ad-hoc basis. The Regional Council and Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture Directorate have Training Plans that determine staff's development needs. The Training Committee has the responsibility to submit training reports.

The research paper further found that there is a compiled list for annual training depending on annual training needs assessment but the budget is not enough to send all staff members for training. Mostly staff are sent to sponsored courses. One senior manager from the RC revealed that some managers attended NIPAM trainings. The researcher also found that the Human Resources Division has developed a form which is sent out to heads of divisions to fill in the name of a trainee and kind of trainings attended in order to keep record of all trainings done annually.

3.7 Service Delivery

3.7.1 Factors affecting performance

Lack of motivation was among the factors that most respondents listed to be affecting their performance. Senior management respondents from Khomas Regional Council argues that the director of planning is overloaded since most delegated functions were placed under the planning directorate. One respondent observed that it was very confusing and more stressful. They have acquired more responsibilities, but the salary remains the same. The research paper also found that some seconded staffs were not cooperative. A lack of adequate resources was also said to be another factor that was affecting their performance.

3.7.2 Changes in Service delivery

Table 4 below shows the respondent's views on service delivery. They had to respond to a question on whether there were any changes in services delivery since the education functions were delegated.

Table 4. *Changes in Service Delivery*

Institution	Yes	No	Not sure
Regional Council Staff members (including seconded staff members)	7	2	3
Councilors	2	0	0
Ministry of Education, Arts and culture	5	1	1
Ministry of Urban and Rural Development	7	0	0
Community members	0	0	2

With regard to the changes in service delivery in the education sector in Khomas Regional Council, most respondents focussed on the achievements / improvements after delegation and some also

highlighted the challenges. Few respondents from both the Khomas Regional Council as well the Education Head Office were of the opinion that the following services have improved since the education

functions were decentralised. For example, there were no more delays in payments of service providers, problems experienced can be attended to on the spot and resolved, documents can be traced easily because no documents are sent to Head Office for payment, and that better planning is in place since they are controlling their budgets themselves. For instance, a respondent from Khomas Regional Council revealed that *“with the transfer of funds for delegated functions, payments are done on time”*.

The above achievements are in line with Winkler's (2005) argument that decentralization has the potential to improve service delivery and education quality, if designed and implemented well. An expression from one middle management respondent from Ministry of Urban and Rural Development is that regional governance will promote participation and effectiveness of service delivery and greater local team initiative will encourage innovation and creativity. According to a senior manager from Khomas Regional Council, the regional Director of Education is very central to ensuring that decentralisation is a success and their analysis of the process and outcome is critical.

The research participants were also asked how decentralisation benefited education management and service delivery. The research paper found that the educational activities are carried out smoothly and delivered on time while the rest of the respondents differed. The analysis of the findings revealed that there was some acknowledgement of notable improvement of certain activities which are delivered on time according to those three respondents. According to MURD (2014), Decentralization gives regions an opportunity to take full responsibility for development in the region by using resources optimally to attend to specific needs of the region.

The paper also found that in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery the budget has been transferred and procurement system has improved. Payments to suppliers are done on time. A senior management respondent from the MEAC stated that *“decentralized education is a noble task with benefits recognizing the role of community structures, parents, school boards, school management and capacitating them to be more effective”*. According to the official, this has the potential to promote community participation, ownership and management of educational services.

This was supported by a respondent from MURD who said that *“the decentralized functions address critical community needs and local leadership has a strategic role in enabling the communities and families to assume their role and collaborate with the regional directors and school management. Therefore decentralization is practically a process of returning the educational function to the communities with the*

Ministry as the key partner in shaping the future of our children”. The respondent further stated that decentralization must be seen as a Community Public Private Partnership process (CPPP).

A middle management respondent from Khomas Regional Council responded that *“decentralisation is good for local democracy, equal economic, cultural and socio-economic development and to improve public service provision in the region, education being one of it.”*

Despite the various improvements and benefits identified by the respondents, some challenges were also highlighted. Office Accommodation was one of the major challenges highlighted by at least 14 respondents. The research paper also found that Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, with the Finnish support to the Decentralization Process in Namibia, contracted a consultancy to carry out a study of the office accommodation needs for decentralisation purposes. The research paper was completed and the findings are available for planning and budgetary purposes, or to source funding from development partners. At least 11 respondents noted that there was a lack of clarity and application of guidelines on delegated functions.

The research paper also found that there is a lack of synergy at regional level due to the slow pace of decentralisation by other sector ministries. It was recommended that the education function will require other services like health, rural water supply and rural electrification, the functions which have not yet been decentralised, especially in the Khomas Rural Constituency. Inadequate financial resources, lack of full appreciation of the benefits of decentralization by some key stakeholders, Confusion of de-concentration (regional presence) as it is sometimes viewed as decentralization by some line Ministries, resistance to change due to the fear of the unknown by mostly the affected staff members and the technocrats, inadequate planning for decentralization by some line Ministries, and lack of capacity at the level of development committees were among the challenges identified.

A concern was raised by an operational respondent from Khomas Regional Council that the impression people got is that decentralisation was going to make things easier, but to their surprise things are taking longer than expected. This view is contrary to the views expressed by most respondents that decentralisation improved service delivery despite some challenges experienced. Staff members were concerned regarding decisions they have to make when it comes to emergencies and the fact that they have to wait from the CRO for approval to do anything.

3.7.3 Policy Consistency

Respondents were asked whether policies made at national level addressed real issues at sub-national level. One respondent stated that *“it depends, if the policy was grafted after consultative evidence gathering, then they might respond to the needs of the local / regional level”*. Another respondent indicated that the implementation of Decentralization Policy strengthened regional governments since these levels of governance are now better capacitated to render improved services to their constituents.

The Ministry of Education through the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) has identified equity and efficiency in the educational outcomes between regions, schools and learners as an important objective for education financing reform in Namibia. Pursuant to this ETSIP’s objective of promoting quality education through equitable distribution of resources, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has committed itself to developing a policy on per capita funding for effective and efficient delivery of educational outcomes across the nation. Per capita financing in education, for both public and private schools in the regions, has become an important priority for effective implementation of ETSIP programme. This policy vision is also in line with the Namibian decentralisation policy, approved by the Cabinet in 1996 and adopted by the National Assembly in 1997. The decentralisation policy envisions significant devolution of social services to be performed at regional level, through the development of a formula-based grant system (MoE, 2008).

The paper also found that there is conflicting responsibilities and claiming of rights due to co-existence of Public Service and Decentralization Acts. Senior Managers have not engaged in dialogue.

3.8 Monitoring and Evaluation

On how often the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and Ministry of Urban and Rural Development monitor delegated functions, the respondents had mixed feelings. Some respondents indicated that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture conducted readiness assessment using their Sector Specific Service Delivery Standards (SSSDS) during 2016, while the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development only conducted readiness assessment in 2013. One respondent from Khomas Regional Council indicated that *“the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development being the coordinating and parent ministry of the regional council should conduct more readiness assessments if the Ministry really wants devolution to happen any time soon”*. Another respondent also from Khomas Regional Council indicated that both the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the

Ministry of Urban and Rural Development conduct readiness assessments together. However, another respondent from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture revealed that *“the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development only conduct SSSDS readiness assessment with the Ministry of Education Arts and Culture because they are part of the Education Decentralisation Task Force, but when they are conducting assessments on generic readiness criteria they do not involve Ministry of Education Arts and Culture”*. The respondent further recommended that the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development involves the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture when conducting readiness assessments on the generic criteria since education also delegated generic functions apart from their specific education functions.

The researcher also found that the implementation process is being spearheaded and monitored at the highest level of government, being the Prime Minister’s Office through the Secretary to Cabinet who is the chairperson of the Decentralization Policy Implementation Committee (DPIC). This committee meets on a monthly basis to look at the progress of decentralisation.

The research paper also established that a High Level Generic Readiness Audits of the Regional Councils to determine their readiness to receive and execute the delegated functions were conducted in 2008/09. The audits were done prior to the delegation of the education and maintenance functions. All thirteen regional councils audited met the generic readiness criteria.

The research paper further revealed that the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development conducted a Readiness Assessment on all Regional Councils during April and May 2013 to ensure that Regional Councils maintains the state of readiness to receive and execute decentralised functions. The assessment was aimed at determining the institutional capacity and progress made with integration of delegated Education and Maintenance Functions with the aim of identifying capacity gaps and the assistance needed to prepare the regional councils to receive more functions and execute the delegated functions.

The research paper also found that all staff members from the Education head office directorates and regional education directorates were trained in monitoring and evaluation techniques and tools with MCA technical support. Despite all systems that were put in place, most respondents from the RC and MEAC felt that the Directorate of Decentralization Coordination did not do much to monitor and evaluate the delegated functions and these have left delegated LMs in despair and not knowing what to do with the decentralization process. According to them, Line Ministries and Regional Councils were left at their own peril, and whenever they reported challenges through

the few workshops that were held, these challenges were seldom attended to. *“No guidance whatsoever came forth from MURD which is supposed to integrate, address challenges and prepare RCs and LMs for the next Phase of Devolution”*, one respondent indicated.

3.9 Readiness for Devolution

A top management level official from Khomas Regional Council indicated that despite challenges, especially of office-accommodation and long overdue legislation harmonization, the Khomas Regional Council is ready

for devolution. However, the official stressed that the directorates within the ministry (MURD) should coordinate their activities as all plan to implement activities in the region and that Regional Council should be involved. As a result, KRCs sometimes have to postpone their own planned activities, thereby delaying the implementation of their own projects and programmes.

From the various respondents, it is clear that they are all of the opinion that KRC is ready for devolution as indicated in the table below.

Table 5. Readiness of Khomas Regional Council for devolution

Institution	Ready for devolution	Not ready for devolution	Not sure
Regional Council Staff members including Education Directorate	12	0	3
Councillor	1	0	0
Ministry of Education, Arts and culture	5	2	0
Ministry of Urban and Rural Development	4	0	0
Community members	0	0	2

4. Discussion

This research paper reflected on different opinions from different interview participants. The main issue raised seems to be the lack of understanding of the decentralisation concepts by most participants as well as the lack of integration of the delegated functions into the Khomas Regional Council. Another important issue raised was the reporting lines that were not adhered to and which hampered proper communication. Despite the above-mentioned challenges, most respondents indicated some improvement in service delivery due to delegation of functions to Khomas Regional Council.

The findings revealed different understanding and knowledge of decentralisation. It is very clear that there are some confusions or little understanding of the decentralisation policy. The study observed that senior and middle management level staff were more knowledgeable about decentralisation compared to operational staff members. The same sentiment was also found in the study conducted by Petrus (2014) in Ohangwena Regional Council. Petrus (2014) stated that this disparity of knowledge of decentralization policy among these levels of participants could imply that management levels are more knowledgeable because they are involved in decision making.

Chikulo (2000) is of the opinion that decentralisation is a means to penetrate rural people. He argues that decentralisation enables people to participate in the socio-economic development process, thereby

softening resistance to the profound social changes entailed by the process.

The researcher is of the opinion that more advocacy and sensitisation on decentralisation can increase the knowledge on the decentralisation policy.

In this paper, the researcher observed that delegated powers are not effectively implemented in areas of appointments, training, and cases of misconduct etc. This results in causing delays, as it was found that the lack of proper communication makes the Human Resources Division sometimes unaware and unable to be involved in some misconduct cases. This shows that a top-down approach continues to dominate. There is a tendency to confuse delegation of powers to field administration of central government with regional councils and to keep both of them heavily dependent on the centre by creating hierarchies.

The findings revealed that the lack of capacity has caused problems in planning and implementing increased responsibilities. Chikulo (2000) states that effective implementation of the decentralisation activities needs the transfer of qualified and experienced manpower to sub-national levels of government. Chikulo argues that management capacity needs to be strengthened to enhance administrative performance and to enable the provision of managerial, technical and financial resources to development schemes within their areas of jurisdiction.

Mugabi (2000) argues that technically competent staff are lacking in many local governments. Mugabi

states that one of the reasons for this is the lack of resources to remunerate staff. The researcher agrees with Mugabi's views because certain key positions (e.g. deputy director, technical services and others) on the structure of the regional council are not filled due to lack of resources. Mugabi further argues that the problems of weak capacity are historical in the sense that they precede the current decentralisation efforts. The findings show that despite some operational challenges, service delivery has improved since the education functions were decentralised to Khomas Regional Council. According to Shaningwa (2012), there are notable improvements of certain education

activities which are delivered on time. Shaningwa's findings are similar to the findings of this researcher. Ahmad and Brosio (2006), argue that even when it is not explicit, improving service delivery is an implicit motivation behind most decentralised efforts. Decentralisation in education in Africa has been gaining momentum in search of efficiency in service delivery (Winkler, et al., 2003).

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